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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Written statement submitted by Pax Christi International, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[16 February 1994]

Situation of human rights in the Sudan

1. The institutions of Sudanese society have been completely dismantled by the dissolving or purging of the social, political and trade union organizations and by the establishment of clandestine organizations. The newspapers which have survived the suppression of the free press have become mouthpieces of the regime. The banned independent organizations for the promotion of human rights have been replaced by the Sudanese Human Rights Authority, the Islamic International Association for Human Rights and the Human Rights Committees. These organizations align their position on that of the Government.

2. Islam, as interpreted by the National Islamic Front, is used abusively as a means of achieving and ensuring political and economic power. In a society with different races, religions and cultures, this leads inevitably to the cruellest intolerance.

3. It is wrongly claimed that the recent dissolution of the Revolutionary Command Council (RCC), on 16 October 1993, marks an important stage in the process of constitutional reform that is preparing for the 1994 elections and a representative democratic system. However, the rigid structure of the Peoples Congresses - from the peoples committees, at the local level, to the National Assembly, at the national level - gives the authorities sufficient or even full control over the decision-making process. Most of the regional and sectoral representatives in the Regional Peoples Congress and in the Transnational Assembly are chosen by co-option and by consensus procedures, on the basis of their political reliability.

4. A major cause of concern are the forced transfers of persons displaced from the "squatter" camps to camps in the desert outside Khartoum. The foreign non-governmental organizations and the local Christian non-governmental organizations that are prepared to carry out aid programmes in these camps are encountering great problems and delays.

5. The forced ideological and military indoctrination of homeless children in the children's camps around Khartoum/Omdurman, as well as in the camps at El Markhyat, El Bashaeir (for girls) and Abu Dom, is in flagrant violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Measures for reuniting families have not yet been announced. Independent observers should be allowed to visit these camps.

6. The human rights situation is still very alarming. Detention/ interrogation/torture centres are still operating in Khartoum. The peoples committees, the peoples police forces and the security services are playing the major role in the daily acts of repression and their control over the daily life of the people appears to be increasing.

7. The Pax Christi International delegation that visited the Nuba mountains from 17 October to 7 November 1993, received well-documented reports concerning the area; they denounce the continued forced transfers of population and the summary executions that are being carried out. The situation is highly disturbing in the so-called "peace villages" where the "returnees", i.e. the displaced persons sent back by the Government, are accommodated.

8. According to several sources, members of the Peoples Defence Forces are being encouraged, through rewards, to rape non-Muslim women in order to procreate a new Islamic generation. Other sources mention abduction and exploitation of and trafficking in children. It is very difficult to verify these reports as most of these "peace villages" are inaccessible to the outside world. The Nuba mountains have so far formed a territory that is entirely closed to inspectors and to the NGOs.

9. All the parties engaged in the conflict are violating human rights in the Nimule area; the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) is carrying out forced recruitment and its units are still plundering civilians. The bombings by the Government air forces often have as their deliberate targets civilian objectives.

10. Since early in February, with the end of the rainy season, the governmental forces have been carrying out a major military operation in the so-called "Three As" frontier region. Thirteen humanitarian organizations have been compelled to withdraw to the extreme south of the Sudan, because of the fighting, the bombing and Khartoum's prohibition of flights bringing supplies to civilians in the area. It is quite clear that the Sudanese army is seeking to create panic and, according to concordant estimates by NGOs on the ground, some 100,000 civilians have already begun an exodus towards an uncertain destination.

11. With the 1989 coup d'état, a regime that has taken religion as its hostage has plunged this great country and its population into injustice, confusion and poverty. No improvement can be seen in the already alarming situation that led to the adoption by the Commission, on 10 March 1993, of resolution 1993/60 on the human rights situation in the Sudan. The draft resolution that will probably be submitted at the fiftieth session can unfortunately do no more than repeat the terms of the preceding one. Pax Christi International calls on all the parties to the conflict to observe the Geneva Conventions on the protection of civilian persons in time of war and to ensure free transit for the movement of international aid to the endangered populations. It also calls for the protection of women and children and of ethnic and religious minorities. It requests the Commission to extend and strengthen the mandate of the Special Rapporteur, whom it congratulates for his courageous description and analysis of a situation that calls for the most determined pressure by the international community.